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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY 0014
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1228
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY 0034
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 USNATO 000305

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SUBJECT: SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS IN NATO'S ISAF AWACS
DEPLOYMENT

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Classified By: Ambassador Ivo Daalder for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C/NF) SUMMARY: NATO's efforts to deploy AWACS aircraft in support of its ISAF operation in Afghanistan suffered a serious blow on July 15 when Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister indicated that overflight clearance would not be quickly forthcoming. In a meeting of the North Atlantic Council later the same morning, the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee (CMC) reported that SACEUR was likely to remove the one remaining AWACS plane from Konya, Turkey, because he was becoming increasingly skeptical of the "northern route." CMC discussed six possible AWACS basing options, arguing that an agreement with the UAE was still the best option for quick deployment. On the other hand, the Deputy Secretary General pointed out that an agreement with the UAE was unlikely unless the UAE significantly changed its position on jurisdiction issues, or Allies--including the U.S.--changed their position on this issue. END SUMMARY

Azeri Foreign Minister Evasive on AWACS

12. (C/NF) During Azeri Foreign Minister Mammadyarov's briefing to NATO's North Atlantic Council on July 15, several Allies urged Azerbaijan to provide the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan with urgently-needed access to its airspace for Airborne Warning And Control Systems (AWACS) over-flights. The AWACS planes would travel over Azerbaijan as they traveled to and from Afghanistan from their interim base in Konya, Turkey. The PermReps stressed that the safety of ISAF personnel depended on these flights beginning soon.

13. (C/NF) Mammadyarov did not directly address the Allies'

questions, instead noting that while Azerbaijan was concerned about the safety of ISAF personnel (including its own), it had other "security concerns." Mammadyarov made a cryptic reference to the military aid Armenia received from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and assistance Georgia received from NATO after the Georgia-Russia conflict in August, 2008. He then lamented that, in contrast, Azerbaijan was still using "Soviet-era" military equipment. He went on to say that while Azerbaijan was "a part of the community it was not yet a part of the family."

PermReps Dismayed

¶4. (C/NF) In the meeting of the North Atlantic Council which immediately followed, Ambassador Daalder said he was very disappointed in Mammadyarov's response. Other PermReps also expressed their extreme dismay over what they had heard. UK PermRep Eldon said that Mammadyarov's evasiveness might mean that it was "the opening of the bazaar," but quickly added that he thought it actually meant a no. Luxembourg's PermRep made a similar statement. The Deputy Secretary General noted that Mammadyarov had made similar points in their bilateral meeting, adding that this "does not give place to much optimism."

Konya Deployment Likely to End

¶5. (C/NF) In response to a direct question from Ambassador Daalder, as well as other PermReps, the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee (CMC) Admiral Di Paola provided an update

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on the AWACS situation. He said that he had held an extensive discussion with SACEUR who was becoming increasingly skeptical that the "northern route" for AWACS was viable. As a result SACEUR was likely to remove the one remaining AWACS plane from Konya.

Basing Alternatives

¶6. (C/NF) Di Paolo briefed PermReps on six possible basing alternatives:

-- Kabul or Kandahar Air Field basing: the CMC called this an "impractical non-option" due to costs, risks, and logistics.

-- Kyrgyzstan (Manas Air Base) or Tajikistan (Dushanbe): the CMC similarly ruled out this option as impractical.

-- Any other nation: the CMC said starting negotiations from scratch with a new potential AWACS basing country would likely take longer than resolving the current over-flight clearance problems.

-- Indian Ocean (i.e. Diego Garcia Air Base): Di Paola said the flight routing from an Indian Ocean base was not feasible, as the distance would further reduce AWACS time on station over Afghanistan. The UK PermRep agreed, arguing that it does not pay to go that far away.

-- Qatar or Oman: The CMC said basing out of Oman would require bilateral negotiation by one Ally (UK), who already had a base agreement there. British PermRep Eldon said the chances were negligible that Oman would accept NATO AWACS basing via the British bilateral arrangement.

-- UAE: Di Paola endorsed basing in the Emirates as the "fastest track option" and the best location to ensure maximum AWACS coverage in Afghanistan. Deputy Secretary General Claudio Bisogniero reported that NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Operations, Ambassador Larry Rossin, was in the UAE to continue negotiations on a basing agreement. At the same time, he warned that the current UAE

position on jurisdiction issues was likely to be a significant hurdle to concluding an agreement, adding that it was also up to NATO nations to decide how flexible they would be on the jurisdiction language.

17. (C/NF) Luxembourg's PermRep pointed out that none of the alternative options would be workable if NATO did not secure over-flight clearances from someone. He said NATO's past tactic of deciding basing in principle and gaining host nation agreement without simultaneously obtaining over-flight clearances from other nations was ineffective in the Konya case. He urged that NATO pursue any new options by negotiating over-flight clearances from relevant countries from the outset.

Comment

18. (C/NF) The Alliance as a whole faces significant hurdles in finding a solution to the basing issue. We should recognize, however, that the Alliance's efforts are often further complicated by U.S. bilateral issues. In the case of Konya, for example, the U.S. was unwilling to assist NATO's efforts to press Turkmenistan on overflight clearance, citing

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delicate bilateral discussions we are already engaged in with Turkmenistan. In addition, while the UAE may be an excellent basing site from a military perspective, U.S. redlines on jurisdiction will create a significant hurdle to reaching a final agreement with the Emirates.

DAALDER